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INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1254
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 001850

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: MILITARY JUSTICE REFORM: SLOW BUT ON TRACK

REF: A. 05 BOGOTA 3235

[1](#)B. 05 BOGOTA 10963

Classified By: Political Counselor Jeffrey DeLaurentis;
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Colonel Rodrigo Martinez, Deputy Director of Colombia's Military Justice System, met with Poloffs on February 28 to discuss military justice reform progress. He said Congress is expected to approve the "shock" reform package, which would create an administrative process for service-related misdemeanors, in its next session, which begins March 16 and ends in June. The Military Justice office expects to implement these reforms within weeks of approval. Congressional approval for the second, more comprehensive, wave of reforms is not expected until after the next Congress takes office in August. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloffs meet with Colonel Rodrigo Martinez, Deputy Director of the Military Justice System, on February 28 to get an update on military justice reform. According to Martinez, Congress did not approve the "shock" reform package introduced last spring before recessing in December. Irregularities in the last of the four required rounds of debate in the Senate caused the President to send the reforms back to the Senate for one more debate after the next session starts March 16. The goal is to circumvent possible constitutional challenges to the "shock" reforms. Congressional approval is expected to follow soon after the last debate. The "shock" reforms will create an administrative process for service-related misdemeanors, which make up 40 percent of the military justice case load, and would prevent the "collapse" of the military justice system under the weight of over 14,500 cases -- which Martinez says is "imminent." (Refs A and B provide more detailed information on the proposed reforms.) Martinez says that the administrative process created by the "shock" reforms could be implemented within weeks of Congressional approval. Implementing the reforms only requires training of magistrates on the new administrative system. He added that the Military Justice System staff have been working on training materials for magistrates while Congress has been out of session; magistrate training will take approximately one week.

[1](#)3. (C) As noted in Ref B, the second wave of reforms, which involves an overhaul of the entire military justice code, will be introduced in the new Congress in August. Martinez expects debate to be lengthy.

[1](#)4. (C) Martinez noted that Brigadier General Puentes, the Military Justice System Director, as well as a group of military magistrates, were in London this week on a UK-sponsored program on the British military justice system.

